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Montana State Fund

Guardian

FEBRUARY 2000

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This week we officially kick off our redesign project at Montana State Fund. The Design Team has already started meeting with our consultant and is looking at how we provide products and services to our customers. This week they will be meeting with our Agents Advisory Council.

One of the first things the Design Team will determine is how best to communicate what is happening with the process. Although there will be no final recommendations until the end of the project, as I mentioned before, we are still committed to letting everyone know how the process is coming along and what will happen next.

I want to encourage employees to continue to send me their thoughts and questions about the redesign project. I have already received many of these excellent questions and comments and have answered them as fully as possible given the information we currently have. They can be found on our Intranet site—just click on the Organizational Redesign Project icon found on the home page.

Also, please remember that you will undoubtedly have many opportunities for input into the reorganization process as the Design Team researches work flows and processes at the State Fund. Each employee's thoughts and ideas are very important and will help guarantee a successful effort.

NEW RECOGNITION AWARD

By Debbie Svaldi

The Employee Recognition Committee recognizes individuals (Employee of the Month) who accomplish outstanding performance and/or achievements. The committee has recently developed a new annual recognition award for "Teams." The criteria are: Team is defined as "A mutually supportive group of people, with a common purpose or goal, who pool their skills, talents, and knowledge to solve complex, chronic problems and issues. They consistently find effective solutions. Team members have the strength to balance commitments of the project with the demands of their everyday jobs. They learn how to work out personal differences." A team consists of employees who are organizationally identified as a team. They may consist of people from different work units within a department.

So get your "thinking caps" on and get ready to make your recommendation. Procedures and forms will be made available by March 6th on the intranet and next to the Employee of the Month forms on each floor.

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

By Wes Winden

Can you imagine what it would be like to feel good about yourself every day? Can you imagine what it would be like to finish those nit-noid (made that word up) projects that have been nagging you for a long time? How about imagining what it's like to have a positive attitude every day? Can you imagine getting something that you've always wanted, but subconsciously thought wasn't possible?

Well, guess what? That's what *Imagine 21* is all about and I'm here to tell you that your imaginations can become your reality! This is a dynamic program that most of you may have already heard about, all the supervisors have had the opportunity to experience, and the rest of us will have the opportunity to experience in the very near future.

The Pacific Institute, out of Seattle, WA, was created by a fella named Lou Tice. He gives us a new perspective on how to look in the mirror at ourselves, become more in touch with who we are, and what we are able to do. Once you participate in his sessions, you will find so many doors of opportunity

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Published monthly by and for the employees of the Montana State Fund.

COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS

Rudeness Isn't Illegal But Costs Plenty

If you think it's not your place to speak up when others exhibit rude behavior at work, think again.

A new study shows that rude employees cost companies millions in lost productivity. And the biggest offenders are managers. When employees think the boss isn't civil, here's what happens:

53% said they've lost hours of productivity sweating about "what will happen next time?"

46% considered changing jobs.

37% say they feel less committed to their company, and

22% deliberately got even by cutting back their efforts.

Keeping your mouth shut and taking it, seems the easy way out. But to get more positive results:

1. **Repeat what was just said.** For example, say, "Let me see if I understood you correctly. Did you mean to say ... ?". Sometimes people don't realize they've come across rude until they hear what they actually said.

2. **Give people the benefit of the doubt.** If they aren't usually rude, assume they're having a bad day. Consider taking a day to cool off before discussing the incident.

3. **Steer the discussion toward solutions** so you can work together for a more productive result.

Source: Christine Pearson, University of North Carolina.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to **Linda Ward**, Market Development Administrative Support, Underwriting & Marketing Department. Linda was named Employee of the Month for January 2000.

The value of Linda's work to the State Fund in terms of dollars can be measured by the nearly perfect commission payment system in producer owned business. Her value to the Marketing Division is immeasurable. Linda is a tireless, dedicated individual who is very much a team member.

Linda has accepted her challenges without hesitation and attacks the problems with vision. As ambassador to our producer franchise, she tactfully addresses commission payments and producer of record problems. She is keenly aware of the importance of our producer partners and is known to our producers as the "go to" person for commission payment issues. She never quits and always sees the problem through.

Congratulations, Linda. You've earned this recognition!

KUDOS KOLUMN

Hats off to Fred & Dave in the Admin & Finance Department for coming in on a Saturday to move Audit and Loss Control up to the 3rd floor. It allowed me to come in that Saturday and get set up in my new office so I was ready to go to work on Monday. Thanks for all your hard work! *Bev Rankin, Premium Audit Supervisor*

Hip, hip, hooray! Congratulations goes out to Mr. Ed Binkley, Admin & Finance Department, for successfully passing the Certified Public Accountant Exam. One of the toughest exams to pass, Ed should feel very proud to have reached this goal. Job well done, Ed! *Mark Barry, Sr. Vice President, Admin & Finance*

Congratulations goes out to Sherry Carroll for successfully completing the Associate in Claim (AIC) course. Great job, Sherry! *Wayne Dillavou, Quality Control/Training Coordinator*

You might say "it's his job." Sometimes I think we take it for granted, almost to the point of an expectation. But Fred, I just have to say "thanks!" for being here in the early morning hours, clearing the sidewalks and parking ramp area of snow and ice, to make it safe as possible for all of us. Your time and efforts are really appreciated! *Wes Winden, Communications Specialist*

Does someone you know deserve a KUDO? E-mail the message or fill out the Kudos form on the Inranet and send to Wes Winden for publication in the Guardian.

IT'S A MYSTERY

By Morgan Hahn

Heavens!!! I've done it...It took five tries, but I've stumped everyone on the January Mystery Employee! Well, I'll give you another chance on last month's, as well as add the February Mystery Employee. You might have to go and do a little investigative, gum-shoeing to figure these out...but what a great chance to meet some of your fellow employees at Montana State Fund!

Here's the January Mystery Employee.

If you can guess correctly..I may have to make this the best prize ever!

Pets: Mystery Employee has 2 cats – Boo & Missy.

Family: S/he has a spouse & three children plus three grandkids!!!

Born: S/he was born in Helena, Montana in January.

Hobbies: S/he enjoys sewing, needle work, babysitting grandchildren. (Come on....that's a pretty good tip!)

Favorite Treat: You'd never guess the favorite treat of this Mystery Employee is donuts.

How do you like to spend your free time?: S/he watches TV, reads, walks (walking off all those donuts, no doubt) & SHOPS!!!

Here's the February Mystery Employee.

Pets: none (Wow!! I need to learn her/his secret!!)

Family: Married with 2 kids.

Born: April Fool's Day (Now, that reallllyyyy explains a lot with this person!)

Hobbies: Crafts and water sports.

Favorite Treat: Chocolate, any kind. (I wonder if s/he shares?)

How do you like to spend your free time?: PTA, helping children with homework, reading, crafts and family vacations to the cabin.

If you think you know who the *Montana State Fund Mystery Employees* are for January AND/OR February, give me a call, or e-mail me with your best guess!...But you better be QUICK!

Good luck!

TRAINING CALENDAR

Getting To Know Montana State Fund; March 1; 2pm-4pm; Park Plaza

Contemporary Writing Skills (PDC); March 1; 1pm-4pm and then again on March 2; 9am-12pm; Room 201

PowerPoint (Advanced); March 2; 9am-12pm; Computer Smith, 104 Broadway

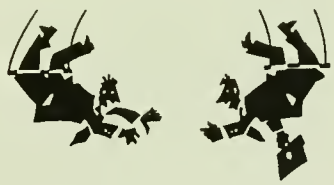
Excel (Advanced); March 10; 1pm-4pm; Computer Smith, 104 Broadway

New Employee Orientation; March 15; 8:30am-10:00am; Room 201

Managing Your Time (PDC); March 23; 8:30am-12:00pm; L&C Library - Large Conf Room

Ergonomic Training (Loss Cntrl Dept); March 23; 9:00am-10:00am; Park Plaza

Access (Intermediate); March 24; 9:00am-12:00pm; Computer Smith, 104 Broadway



HUMAN RESOURCES

Personnel changes as of February 18, 2000

New Hires
- Susan Sakry, Admin & Finance
- Lynn Grosfield, UW & Marketing
- Kristie Rhoades, Admin & Finance

Departures
- Crystal Murphy, Admin & Finance

Promotions
- Vickie Shapiro - Underwriting Technician Assistant

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

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opening up in front of you, it will almost be overwhelming. In fact, with some of the things he talks about, you'll find yourself asking, "Now why didn't I think of that?", or "Wow, that makes a lot of sense!" Your whole perspective on your personal and professional life will change. You'll begin to feel yourself grow and move in directions you, quite frankly, didn't think were possible.

Can you tell I'm excited about it? You betcha! And, I'm even more excited about the opportunity all of us will have to experience this dynamic program. When can you expect this to take place? Well, I'm told that we'll see sessions offered in the next month or so. So keep your eyes and ears peeled open for when this information is made available. I can not encourage you enough to take advantage of this program. Try it.... you'll like it!

Stay tuned, there's a lot more to come!

Editor: Chuck Christiansen
Managing Editor: Wes Winden
Employee Reporters:
Morgan Hahn Karen Wegner
Jay Phillips

Please call Wes Winden, 444-6502 with comments or suggested articles.

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WATCH YOUR WORDS

By Karen Wegner

WATCH YOUR WORDS!

Worrisome words that up the irritation factor:
can't
can't help you
you should have
all we can do
it's company policy
you have to

Soothing words and extreme courtesy calm the "Emotionally Challenged:"

1. Ask what they want-
   "What would you like for us to do?"
   "What will work best for you?"

2. Be courteous and caring -
   "Let me take care of that for you."
   "Would you like to use our telephone?"
   "Please forgive me, but I must ask again..."

3. Take responsibility -
   "Give me a few minutes and I'll get to the bottom of this."
   "I apologize for that misinformation, here's what I can do ..."
   "Our hands are tied by federal law, but here's what I can do ..."

If rules, regulations, or company policy stand in your way - offer personal help:
"Even though the company can't replace your product, I feel badly about your experience, and here's what I would like to do to help you."

4. Take action -
   "I want to get down every word you are saying ..."
   "Let's take care of this right now."

Customers are like a box of chocolates...you never know what you're going to get, so enjoy each one.

EAC UPDATE
UNDERWRITING & MARKETING DEPARTMENT

Committee Recommendation: Conduct Spot Salary Survey

Benefits: Ensure MSF is paying market price for job duties completed. Reduce turnover.

Action: A salary survey was conducted by the Human Resources & Communications Department in June 1999. The results of the survey indicated policy services positions were appropriately classified, but loss control positions were not at market level. Loss control consultant positions were upgraded accordingly.

Committee Recommendation: Implement a new computer system.

Benefits: Permit employees to perform functions within minutes rather than days; improve efficiency of employees.

Action: On June 24, 1999 we launched our new PowerComp™ system. We have been working toward achieving system stability and have targeted for completion of all immediate and critical system issues. "All stops were pulled" and we have brought in 7 consultants to get this done as soon as possible.

Committee Recommendation: Complete PPRPs on schedule.

Benefits: Demonstrates management's commitment to employees and the PPRP process.

Action: This issue was raised as a result of the perception employees were not given sufficient time to complete self-assessments. During the last performance review cycle, supervisors were encouraged to ensure timelines were met and that staff had ample time to complete self-assessments. The enhancement of the PPRP process to streamline Mid-Term evaluations has assisted in this process immensely.